



# *The HPD News*

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November 2002

## **Graffiti Abatement Program Underway in Spring Branch Area**

The Houston Police Department has teamed up with Crime Stoppers and the Mayor's Anti-Gang Task Force to combat graffiti in the Spring Branch area.

Officers assigned to the Spring Branch storefront reported an increase in the number of citizen complaints about graffiti in the area this past summer.

Officers began documenting graffiti in the neighborhood and found newer graffiti being done by the same group of



**The Houston Police Department, Crime Stoppers, and the Mayor's Anti-Gang Task Force work together to put a lock on graffiti in the Spring Branch area.**

vandals that included their initials or identifying marks. Graffiti vandals, known as "taggers," try to get their names up on as many places as possible. This kind of vandalism can cause several million dollars worth of damage.

Graffiti on places such as a school, community center, church, or cemetery is a felony regardless of the dollar amount of damage.

In September, Crime Stoppers announced that anyone with information leading to the arrest and charges being filed on a suspect accused of graffiti vandalism could be eligible for a reward of up to \$5,000.

Just two days after the Crime Stoppers announcement, a 17-year old suspect was arrested after being caught vandalizing an apartment complex. The suspect was found with a Crime Stoppers flier in his pocket that outlined the program's guidelines. The flier also featured a picture of graffiti that had been done by this same suspect.

Police and volunteers from local civic groups have cleaned up at least 25 buildings, fences, park benches, and light poles since the Crime Stoppers announcement was made. More graffiti cleanups are planned in the coming months.

Anyone with information about graffiti vandalism should call the Houston Police Department at (713) 222-3131 or Crime Stoppers at (713) 222-TIPS.

## Blue Santa Sets Goal of Collecting 1,000 Bicycles



The holiday season is fast approaching and the Houston Police Department's Blue Santa program is ready to help less fortunate families have a merry Christmas.

Blue Santa began in 1984 and has helped deliver thousands of gifts, toys, and holiday cheer to needy children. Officers from Blue Santa identify which children will need help throughout the year. When the program first began, officers would use their own money to buy toys for the children. Blue Santa now has the participation of local media outlets as well as corporate sponsors. City employees also contribute through the Combined Municipal Campaign using convenient payroll deductions.

A "bike drop" has been held in recent years to bring more public attention to Blue Santa. Last year's efforts led to a contribution of over 550 bicycles and 25,000 toys. Blue Santa organizers have set a goal to collect 1,000 bicycles this year and enough toys to help nearly 10,000 children have a merrier Christmas.

A bike assembly will be held Wednesday, December 4, 2002, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the George R. Brown Convention Center. If you are a city employee or an employee of another law enforcement agency and would like to volunteer for the bike assembly, call Officer Jack Hanagriff at (713) 247-4514. For more information about Blue Santa, contact Officer Fred Pyland at (713) 731-5102 or access Blue Santa's Web site at [www.bluesantahouston.org](http://www.bluesantahouston.org).

## La Comida Food Drive Helps Feed Houston's Hungry

The Houston Police Department, Fiesta Mart, Pepsi-Cola, and the Houston Citizens' Police Academy Alumni Association are once again combining their efforts to sponsor the La Comida Food Drive. This is the 17<sup>th</sup> year for the drive that provides food to needy families during the Christmas holidays.

"Along with repeating the result of last year's food drive, which provided for 3,500 families, we would also like to increase the amount of food in each food basket," said Lieutenant D.R. Thornton (Community Services).

During the first two weekends of December, barrels will be located at various Fiesta Mart stores where food contributions can be made. HPD employees can donate canned goods at the Community Services Division on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor at HPD Headquarters at 1200 Travis Street.

Volunteers are needed for the food distribution at the Pepsi-Cola warehouse (9300 La Porte Freeway) on Saturday, December 21, 2002.

If you would like to volunteer or need to locate a participating Fiesta Mart, call Officer Doug Singleton at (713) 308-3232.

## Navidad en El Barrio Focuses on Senior Citizens This Year

Since 1987, Navidad en El Barrio has been known as a Christmas program for children. While that will never change, this year's primary focus will be on Houston's senior citizens.

In addition to the annual festivities, this year's Navidad en El Barrio will feature a "Newlywed Game" for senior couples. Seniors from different community centers will be selected for the panel similar to the popular game show. The winning couple will enjoy a weekend getaway in Galveston.

"The idea is to have fun as we honor long-standing marriages and look up to seniors who have remained married for 20 years or more," said Officer Israel Gomez, the founder of Navidad en El Barrio.

There will also be a "Dating Game" for seniors. The winning couple will be awarded a romantic date complete with limousine service.

For more information about this year's Navidad en El Barrio, log on to [www.navidadenelbarrio.org](http://www.navidadenelbarrio.org).

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## Hundreds of HPD Civilians Attend Conference

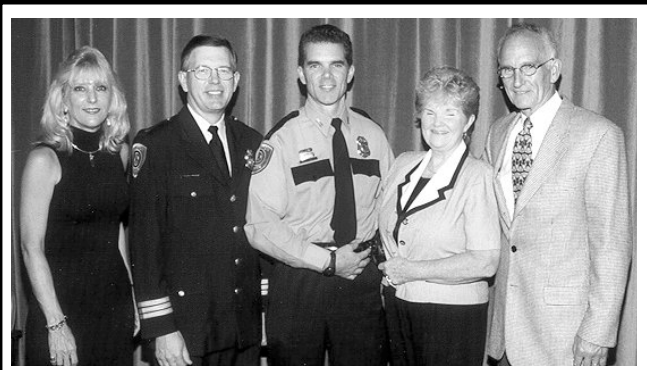
As many as 425 of HPD's civilian employees – one in every four – gathered to learn more about the department and themselves at the seventh annual Civilian Personnel Training Conference on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

While some employees might look at such a conference as just another tedious training session, the conference and its 17 topics to select from went beyond that stereotype. For example, there were classes designed to help employees better understand fundamentals of a computer, how to manage money in deferred compensation plans, and how to determine if enrolling in the civilian pension plan was for them. Other programs included "Living a Normal Life While Working Evenings and Nights" and "Stand Up and Speak," a session taught by members of HPD's Toastmasters organization.

Programs chosen reflected requests from civilians dating back to the start of this annual conference in 1996. Following feedback after each conference, training coordinators choose what they believe our employees want and deserve. "This is the one day set aside each year for the Police Department to recognize and honor the contributions of our civilian employees," said Jeanne Pressler, senior trainer for civilian employees. "It's a day-long program aimed at helping our people on their jobs and with their personal development."

## Time Capsule: November

In 1941, a Civilian Auxiliary Police force was formed to work alongside HPD officers. According to newspaper stories, the Civilian Auxiliary Police were a first for Houston and for the country. It was established to protect the citizens of Houston while sworn officers were fighting in World War II. About 200 people applied and then were subjected to a rigorous screening process. If the applicant passed the initial screening they were then trained and paired with a sworn officer to patrol the city from two to three nights a week. When the war ended, the Auxiliary Police program was maintained for several more years because of its success.



### Two HPD Employees Former Neighbors in Pennsylvania

Two veteran HPD employees recently discovered that they grew up just a few miles from each other. That's not so unusual if you lived in Houston all your life. But it is if you grew up in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and then moved to Houston to pursue a career with HPD. Captain Brian Lumpkin was born in Levittown, PA. He was sworn as an HPD officer in 1982 and now commands the Fondren Division. Debra Williams was raised in Yardley, PA and began volunteer work with HPD in 1988. She joined as an employee in 1992 and has advanced to become the department's Awards Coordinator. Bucks County, PA is 1,590 miles from Houston. In photo (l. to r.): Awards Coordinator Debra Williams, Acting Chief of Police Tim Oettmeier, Captain Brian Lumpkin (Fondren Division) and his parents, Kate Lumpkin and Frank Lumpkin, share a moment following the recent Promotions and Awards Ceremony.



### Citizens' Police Academy Elects New Officers

New officers for the Houston Citizens' Police Academy Alumni Association were sworn in recently. They are (l. to r.) Rosa Henderson, 1st vice-president; Barbara Hite, secretary; John Rohrer, treasurer; Billie Richey, president; Nick Crnkovic, parliamentarian; Larry Stegent, director, position 1 (education); Yolanda Joseph, director, position 2 (membership); and Clarence Vick, director, position 3 (finance).

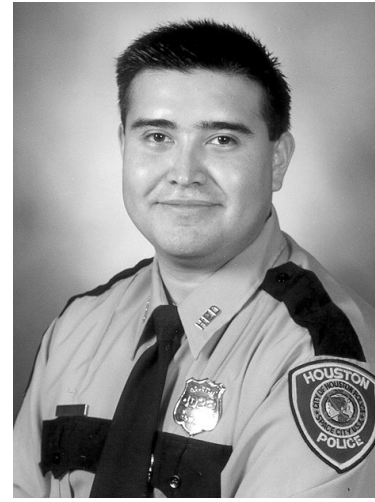


# HPD Honors 2002 Hispanic Officers of the Year



**Officer Ronald R. Pena**

Congratulations to the 2002 Hispanic Officers of the Year, who were announced at a banquet in their honor on October 18 at the Sheraton Brookhollow Hotel. Officer Ronald R. Pena (North Division), pictured on the left, and Officer Gustavo E. Rodriguez (Juvenile Division Missing Persons Unit) exemplify dedication and productivity in performing their assigned duties. The citizens of Houston are better served because these officers consistently go above and beyond the call of duty.



**Officer Gustavo E. Rodriguez**

## 'Tis the Season to Be Safe

As the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday season approaches, it is wise to keep some simple safety tips in mind. This could help you reduce your chances of becoming a victim of crime and identity theft. Here are a few suggestions that can help make the holidays safer.

### **While shopping:**

- Stay alert and aware of what is happening around you. Shop with friends, rather than alone.
- Do not carry large amounts of cash. Pay for items with a check, a credit card, or a debit card. If you carry a purse, do not wrap the strap around your arms or shoulders. You could be injured if someone tries to snatch your purse. Men should not carry their wallets in their rear pants pocket.
- Do not reveal your debit card PIN, your credit card number, or your driver's license number to any strangers. Identity theft can occur at any time.
- Do not leave your purchases where someone could easily steal them. Keep them with you.
- Educate your children on what they should do if they become lost or separated from you.
- Do not jeopardize your safety by carrying too many packages at one time.

### **In the parking lot:**

- Avoid shopping at night. Park in well-lighted areas. Do not park next to vehicles with dark-tinted windows. Have your keys in your hands when walking to your vehicle. Be aware of anyone who may be watching you.
- Walk briskly, confidently, and directly through the parking lot to your destination.

### **At home:**

- Keep the outside of your home well lighted with the doors locked and the curtains closed.
- Use non-clear garbage bags when you throw away boxes that contained big-ticket items.
- Never place gifts in a window.

### **While traveling:**

- Use automatic timers for your interior lights at home to give the appearance that someone is there.
- Ask a neighbor to watch your home. Ask them to collect your mail and newspapers. Ask them to also park in your driveway.

Make an inventory of your valuables for insurance purposes. For more information about holiday safety, contact the Houston Police Department's Community Services Division at (713) 308-3200.